

4/21/00
Western

Why didn't Grace clean its properties before leaving Libby?

To the Editor:

I read headlines like "A Town Left to Die," and "Asbestos Death Haunts Libby." This makes me sick!

All I know is that people are dying from asbestosis every day. I feel sympathy for all the mine workers and their families. This entire situation deeply saddens me. The mine has basically been closed for 10 years. Now tell me why the properties that they owned were not cleaned up before W.R. Grace left Libby? Why was the property sold? Why was the buyer not informed? Why did they do this to my family? Would they have done it to their own? My entire family has been exposed to this killer: mother, father, sister, brother-in-law, nieces and nephews, husband and child. I want some answers.

I currently live in Libby with my husband Kevin and my daughter Katie. My parents are Mel and Lerah Parker of Raintree Nursery. Kevin and I moved here in 1994 to be close to my family. When we

arrived here in Libby we stayed on my parents property for about 6 months. My daughter was only a year old when we started spending many hours on the property. At this time we had no idea of the problems.

I worked at the Raintree Nursery for five years. The vermiculite is everywhere on the property. Cleanup was an everyday thing. The wind would blow dust particles all over. We spent every summer for the last six years sweeping in the long shed. The dust was unbearable at times. The sad thing is that it wasn't just Mel and Lerah and their employees, it was their grandchildren that were spending the summer there.

I was astonished by the results of the testing that had been done on my parents' property. The levels of hazardous air and material are incredibly high. It's devastating to think that we worked and played day in and day out on this contaminated property. W.R. Grace never gave us the choice. They picked our destiny for us.

I wish someone could tell me how much exposure it actually takes. I am very concerned for my family. My parents have spent 6 years improving that property. Little did they know it was killing them. This never should have happened. We should never have been exposed to this killer.

My daughter is now seven years old. She has been on the property for six years. She worked with me and her grandparents nearly every day. I can't express to you how this makes me feel. I wonder if these people who left this mess would let their children or grandchildren on this property? I don't think so.

Someone please tell me what am I supposed to do. Just wait? What they have done is completely unacceptable. Not one person in my family should have to be going through this. My daughter asked me the other day if grandma and grandpa were going to die from living on the property. How am I supposed to explain that maybe they will and maybe her parents and most importantly herself?

It has been six years, basically her entire life, is that enough of an exposure? I think one day was more than she ever should have been exposed. They never gave her a chance. They never gave any of us a chance.

I pray every day that we will be blessed with good health and long life. No matter how I wish and pray it will never take away the fact that there is a very good chance that if not all of my family, part of my family will die from asbestosis.

I can't change the past, and it's unfortunate that I do not look forward to the future. I can't foresee any positive outcome. There have been 10 lives directly affected by that property. Ten more lives that never should have been exposed. W.R. Grace had a responsibility and they let us down. They let me down. I hope to God they can sleep at night because not a day will go by that I won't blame them for putting my family in this situation.

I guarantee I will not go quietly.
Lerah Castleton

How many people do they contaminate before being accountable?

To the Editor:

I can't sit by and just do nothing anymore. W.R. Grace has caused so many problems for my family. My name is Tina Matson and Mel and Lerah Parker of Raintree Nursery are my parents.

I can't believe W.R. Grace can even think of bringing my parents' future down. Especially after placing all of our lives in jeopardy. Who do they think they are?

They sold a piece of land that they contaminated. They sold it to well-known business owners. It would have been impossible for W.R. Grace to not of known that this was going to be used for a nursery business. My parents have worked for years improving the property.

W.R. Grace will not admit that

there is a problem. They never would have been able to sell if the truth would have been revealed. Their greed is disgusting. I wonder if the money from selling this contaminated property was worth it? They don't care that they made a few dollars at the expense of our lives and livelihood.

My parents bought that land from W.R. Grace and turned it into a thriving business. They invited friends and family to enjoy their beautiful property with them. Now it's all gone. W.R. Grace has ruined them. Their business is gone, their future is gone, and all we can hope for is their health.

I wonder if these W.R. Grace lawyers would like to just wait around to find out whether or not

they were going to die from asbestosis? Worse yet, their children and grandchildren? We won't know for many years.

Mel and Lerah are forced to just wait to see if their grandchildren will be around to graduate from high school. That is, if they are still around. All of this pain for profits.

W.R. Grace has caused so many problems. Now they are fighting to make sure they don't lose too much from their pockets. How dare they. They will never be able to pay enough for the pain they have caused. They have crushed my family, my parents and my sister's family. God help these people who did this to my family, they will need all the help they can get. They have taken part in killing people. In my

eyes, this is a form of murder, manslaughter at the very least. Now we are just waiting it out to see if we will survive.

W.R. Grace did this to us. They refuse to admit it or take any blame. When the mine closed all this contamination should have been buried. Their idea now is to "spot clean" the "hot areas." What is this? They didn't do it right the first time, and now they don't want to do it right the second time. How many people do they have to contaminate before they are held accountable for their action. They never should have had the chance to contaminate my family. God forbid we let them to it to anyone else.

Tina Matson
Wilson, N.C.